

Reversible/Treatable Causes of Dementia

All of these can cause dementia, or can further impair someone with Alzheimer's disease (AD) or other dementia. Whenever a person with dementia shows sudden or rapid decline, assess for these conditions as soon as possible.

Infection – bladder/urinary tract (UTI) infections are the most common (can cause “urinary psychosis”) but any infection can cause memory loss/confusion.

Medication Combinations/Interactions – multiple prescribed and over the counter medications, especially from multiple physicians, can interact, increase side effects when taken together and/or become toxic when taken together. (Memory-enhancing drugs such as Aricept, Reminyl or Exelon are “cholinergic”, care should be taken if combining with “anti-cholinergic” drugs).

Medication Toxicity – medications can build up in the body when the person can't metabolize (digest) them due to frailty, health problems, etc.

Depression – forgetfulness, lack of energy, confusion, agitation (etc.) can occur. People diagnosed with depression usually admit to symptoms (compared to the tendency of people with Alzheimer's disease to deny them). Estimates show as many as half of all people with Alzheimer's disease may also suffer from depression, but are unlikely to recognize their depressive symptoms. Antidepressant medications can help restore vitality and function to people who are depressed and to many people with both dementia and depression.

Dehydration – can cause confusion and “sundowning” (agitation & problems during the evening transition time). Assure good hydration in the afternoon and remember all fluids count (not just water) – but avoid beverages with caffeine.

Constipation - can cause agitation in people with dementia, and can be caused or worsened by dehydration.

Chronic Pain – is the most under-diagnosed problem for people with dementia, and can cause a wide-variety of agitated/confused responses, lack of initiative and depression on a bio-chemical level.

Poor Nutrition – especially lack of the B Vitamins: Folic acid and Thiamin.

Sensory Losses – hearing loss, vision problems, etc.- seem like dementia.

Tumors – occurring anywhere in the body, especially in the brain.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning – is odorless. Install detectors in home.

Lyme Disease – (from ticks) diagnose by blood test. Treat with antibiotics.

Fluctuating Blood Sugar – diabetes or hypoglycemic conditions.

Low Functioning or Hypo-Thyroid – Deficiency in thyroid hormones.